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Quarterly NEWS-LETTER

OF THE BOOK CLUB OF
CALIFORNIA

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CONTENTS

Let's Fill the Roll! — Moral Couplets — The Bancroft Library —
The California Literary Pamphlets — Elected to Membership.



LET'S FILL THE ROLL!

HAVING had occasion recently to look through a file of early Club correspondence, we came across an interesting letter from one of the charter members. One paragraph deserves to be quoted: "Interest in book collecting is on the increase and membership is sure to grow as we make the work of the society better known. There is no good reason why we should not soon have 200 members, perhaps more."

In 1913, when these lines were written, this must have seemed a recklessly optimistic forecast. The Club had only recently been launched, with a charter membership that, after a great deal of effort on the part of

its organizers, numbered only 59. Obviously the Club had a long way to go before the announced goal of 200 could be reached.

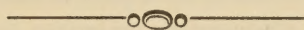
The fact that the goal was not only reached but eventually more than doubled is convincing evidence that early members believed in the Club's present and future usefulness. More important, it shows that they were willing to devote the time and effort necessary to make it realize its possibilities. For it needs to be understood that at no time in its history has the Club's growth been spontaneous. The roll was increased from 59 to 200 and above because virtually all the early members put their shoulders to the wheel. Without the spirit of confidence shown in the lines quoted above, the Club would hardly have lived beyond the first year or two.

It has occurred to us that now is the time to emulate the optimism of this early member and to venture another prediction. Surely, "there is no good reason" why the roll should not be filled before the end of 1936. Compared with the task facing the members in 1913, this should be no very difficult feat. The early group set out to increase the membership nearly four-fold; today it is necessary to add only about 15 per cent to the number now on the roll.

Here is an opportunity to prove that present day members are as sincerely interested in the Club's welfare as were those of a quarter-century ago. The Club's most immediate and pressing need is the same today as it was then: more members. Its moderate dues of \$10.00 per year have always required that the Club operate on a strictly limited budget. But notwithstanding careful management, its present activities involve a

considerable outlay, and if these are to be maintained a full membership of 500 is an absolute necessity.

A card is enclosed on which candidates may be proposed or the names of prospects submitted. Each member is invited to consider this an invitation to give his personal attention to the Club's major problem: that of restoring the roll to its maximum.



MORAL COUPLETS

SLIGHTLY more than two hundred years ago, in 1735, there was issued from the shop of a young Philadelphia printer a pamphlet with a curious title: "Cato's Moral Distichs, Englished in Couplets." The little work probably attracted but slight attention when it first appeared; nonetheless, it had a number of points of uncommon interest. It was, for one thing, among the earliest translations from the classics ever to be printed in America. For another, the man by whom it had been "Englished in Couplets" was none other than James Logan, one of the leading men of the colony and the agent for its proprietary family, the Penns. The text, as the title indicates, consisted of a collection of proverbs presented in the form of two-line, rhymed verses: compact, quaintly-phrased maxims pointing out the advantages of thrift, sobriety, forbearance, punctuality, piety, generosity, and the other standard virtues.

In appearance, as in contents, "Moral Distichs" was above reproach. Examination of its pages reveal that they were set up and seen through the press by someone with both taste and skill in the printer's art. The text was set in type of good design and appropriate size, and

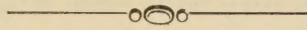
it was well-placed on the pages; the title-page was simple but strong and pleasing; decoration was used sparingly enough to be effective, and paper, ink and presswork were all such that the pages of surviving copies remain crisp and bright to this day. All this need occasion no surprise, for the printer, besides being a young man of intelligence, was a close student of his craft. Before he had ventured to open a shop of his own, he had undergone a thorough training not only in Philadelphia but in his native Boston and, during the years 1724 to 1726, in two of the best-known shops in London.

Benjamin Franklin was only twenty-nine when "Moral Distichs" was issued from his "New Printing Office near the Market" in pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia, and the work therefore belongs to the early period of his career as a publisher-printer. It preceded another and more celebrated Franklin pamphlet, "Cato Major" (also "Englished" by James Logan) by nine years. Writers on American printing often refer to the latter as Franklin's most successful work from the standpoint of typography, but undoubtedly many who have made this statement did so without having had an opportunity to examine "Moral Distichs." For this 1735 pamphlet well deserves to be called "excessively rare." The number of known copies in America is less than half a dozen. Of these, two (one incomplete) are in California.

The Club contemplates the publication in the near future of a little book about this interesting curiosity of early American printing. All the details have not yet been worked out but according to present plans, the complete text of the pamphlet will be printed, and a sufficient number of pages from the original will be reproduced in facsimile to convey the style and flavor of

its initial printing. In addition, there will be a foreword outlining the circumstances of its first publication and tracing the influence of this collection of "moral couplets" upon some of Franklin's own later contributions to "Poor Richard's Almanack."

If all goes well, members may expect to receive a detailed announcement of this publication, and an order card, about the middle of October.



THE BANCROFT LIBRARY

by HERBERT I. PRIESTLEY

Editor's Note: From time to time, as space permits, it is planned to publish a series of papers on some of the outstanding special collections of books and manuscripts on the Pacific Coast, both those in institutions and privately owned. The series begins with the following account of the important Bancroft historical collection at the University of California. Dr. Priestley is Professor of Mexican History at the University and Librarian of The Bancroft Library.

JUST short of thirty years ago the Bancroft Library came into possession of the University of California through purchase from its builder. The collection owed its beginnings, in the last quarter of the preceding century, to the enterprise of Hubert Howe Bancroft, who began to gather materials on the western part of the United States in preparation for his writing of *The Native Races of the Pacific Slope*. Once that task was completed, it was apparent that the materials on hand would serve admirably in the composition of a history of the West which should cover the regions into which the Spanish conquest of North America had intruded.

Mr. Bancroft sent his buyers into every part of the

world where such materials were offered, and they bought all that was available, sometimes in large consignments, when special libraries were offered for sale. Other purchases carried on simultaneously made his collection distinguished in the field in a short time. For manuscript materials the opportunity in the earlier day was not as it has been during the past thirty years, as the archives of the governments of the world were not open to investigators as they have been since Bancroft's day. Yet his gatherings were notable, especially in the field of pioneer western history. Research agents went throughout the West, collecting memoirs and diaries from the best known of the early comers and making transcripts of their statements of their experiences. Nowhere in the whole field is there such a collection of pioneer records as were gathered together during those years.

One of the most remarkable parts of the manuscript collection gathered by Mr. Bancroft was his transcription and calendar of the archives of the province and department of California under Spain and Mexico. These transcripts, owing to the disaster of 1906, now remain as the unique and priceless record of governmental action during the formative period of the white man's occupation of California. At the same time a large number of formally written histories were gathered, some of them in Spanish, which have been used often by later investigators, for their value in throwing light on the pioneer days. Several of these are still worthy of publication, even though their material has been to a degree outmoded by later investigators.

The thirty-nine volumes entitled Bancroft's Works, compiled in a cooperative effort which was at the time (1875-1895) an innovation in historical writing, consti-

tute a reservoir of information concerning the Caribbean area, Central America, Mexico, California and the Northwest, which has never been duplicated or equalled in extent and purview. No later historical work on any part of the field covered has been able to proceed intelligently since the Works were completed, without referring to the monumental store of materials digested by Mr. Bancroft's staff of writers. It should be emphasized that the histories, as they stand, constitute moreover a monument to a mode of thinking and interpretation common in their day but now gone out of style, so that the Works are of themselves a document on the type of thinking which proved popular during the eighties and nineties of the past century. The bibliographies compiled by Bancroft's scribes have in a few cases been superseded, but they are none the less consulted diligently by all present day writers in the field.

The escape of the collection from the episode of 1906 was one of the miracles of that day; no longer in active use, the library reposed in its Valencia Street home, where the flames did not reach. A year later it came to Berkeley and became a workshop for investigators in many fields of writing. Not only historians, but economists, geographers, political scientists, linguists, artists, litterateurs, and a host of others, have made their paths to the doors of the Bancroft Library during its stay at the University of California, and their acknowledgments of assistance rendered here have been published in prefatory notes by the literal hundreds. Scores of young men and women have also completed theses in the Library's field of interest, and have gone to teaching positions of responsibility, winning success in their chosen lines.

The collection has stayed pretty well within the field outlined by Mr. Bancroft, though certain materials upon Spain and South America have been added because the field naturally widens as it intensifies. Certain materials bearing upon the West of the United States not a part of the Spanish conquest have been added as well, for the same reason. As time goes on, and research becomes engaged with the more purely political and economic, as well as social and spiritual values, of the regions covered, the type of accession by the Library will be forced to follow the lines of research which appeal to those who know the *milieu* best.

The materials of special value, aside from the manuscripts and documents mentioned, have been gathered from archives in Spain, Mexico, and South America, though the latter have been but barely touched. There is a newspaper collection almost without rival within the field; the official documents from the Spanish American countries have become a significant part of the collection. The writings of the past fifteen or twenty years on Western history have been gathered as fast as funds have allowed; pure literature of the West has had to be omitted in large part, especially as the offerings in historical subjects have multiplied from our presses.

It should be said that with all its activity and output, the collection has suffered from lack of funds to make adequate purchases of offerings, especially as the prices of these items have risen since the Great War. Numerous friends of the Library have in part compensated for this lack by most generous gifts, totalling within the past three years to over forty thousand dollars. These gifts have enabled the Library to purchase outstanding manuscripts and other materials rated as collectors'

items in some instances, but they have been obtained here rather for their unique interest to history. The offerings still available, without funds to obtain them, would cost five times as much as our good angels have been able to contribute. The University and the State are eternally indebted to them, for their timely assistance, and the Library hopes that their number will be multiplied as the needs of the day are made manifest.

THE CALIFORNIA LITERARY
PAMPHLETS

FOUR of the six parts of the Club's current series of keepsakes have now been distributed to the members. W. C. Morrow's "Over an Absinthe Bottle" appeared in February; the April pamphlet was Nora May French's "Poems;" this was followed in June by Ambrose Bierce's "Prattle," and in August by Emma Frances Dawson's "An Itinerant House."

The remaining two pamphlets are now in preparation. In contents and appearance both promise to maintain the standards set by the earlier numbers of the series.

Number Five, which will be distributed early in October, will contain one of John Muir's characteristic sketches, a rambling and delightful account of a walking tour across California, called "Afoot to Yosemite." Written shortly after his arrival from the East, the paper reflects Muir's fresh delight at the varied natural attractions of the region, to the study and enjoyment of which he was to devote most of his remaining years. "A Foot to Yosemite" will have a foreword by Dr. Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, President of Mills College,

and the pamphlet will be designed and printed by Miss Rosalind Keep at The Eucalyptus Press.

To commemorate the centenary of his birth, which falls this year, the final pamphlet of the series will be devoted to Bret Harte. The material is of unusual interest. The booklet will consist of a hitherto unpublished letter of Harte, written from San Francisco in 1868, in which the author discussed at some length the theme of one of his sketches of pioneer life and, incidentally, threw revealing light on his attitude toward his work. The sketch to which the letter refers, "A Night at Wingdam," will also be printed, for the one helps to explain the other, and the pamphlet will be completed by a foreword by Idwal Jones. "A Night at Wingdam" will be designed and printed by The Plantin Press, Los Angeles, and will be ready early in December.

In the next number of the News-Letter announcement will be made of the subject of the Club's fourth series of keepsakes, to be distributed during 1937. Meantime, only a few of the fifty duplicate sets of the current series remain unsubscribed. Members who may be planning to order one or more sets are urged to act promptly.

¶ The projected Club edition of Clarence King's "The Helmet of Mambrino," announced some months ago, is still in the preliminary stages due to continued delays in obtaining certain of the material. The plan has not been abandoned, however. The present indications are that this publication will follow the Franklin item described in this issue.

¶ The list, printed in the June News-Letter, of the ten Club publications of which less than fifty copies remain, resulted in the sale of a considerable number of copies. In no instance, however, was the supply entirely exhausted, and members who may be planning to order still have all ten titles to select from.

ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

THE following names have been added to the roll since June 1:

<i>Member</i>		<i>Sponsor</i>
Ben Abramson	Chicago, Ill.	Flodden W. Heron
Dr. Harold Brunn	San Francisco, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
Mrs. Herbert Fleishhacker, Jr.	San Francisco, Cal.	Mrs. Herbert Fleishhacker
Alfred E. Green	Puente, Cal.	Oscar Lewis
Robert K. Haas	New York, N. Y.	Albert M. Bender
Kirk B. Johnson	Santa Barbara, Cal.	John J. Mitchell
Allan Kempe	Ojai, Cal.	John J. Mitchell
Dr. L. L. Meininger	Palo Alto, Cal.	Samuel I. Wormser
Mrs. Henry D. Nichols	Piedmont, Cal.	George Fields

This is the smallest number of new members to be elected in any three-months period within the past three years. Members who are interested in the Club's plan to restore the roll to its maximum during the remainder of 1936 are referred to the article beginning on the first page of this issue.

¶ The Club receives rather frequent requests for early numbers of the News-Letter, particularly for the four numbers of Volume I, of which no copies remain on hand. Members who have copies of any of these early issues for which they have no further use will confer a favor by mailing them to the Club. The Grolier Club, New York, wishes to bind its file but lacks Number 4 of Volume I (March 1934). Can any member supply this?

¶ This letter, recently received, renews a suggestion that has been made periodically ever since the Club was started.

"It seems to me that The Book Club of California could perform no more useful work than to set about the formation of a Library of Pacific Coast Typography. We all know that Pacific Coast craftsmen have been influential in the fine printing movement, yet no serious, systematic attempt has ever been made to get together and

preserve their productions—both those of the present day and of the past. I am aware that there already exist some excellent collections of Western fine printing, such as those established by Albert M. Bender in the San Francisco Public Library and at Mills College. Such a collection as I am proposing, however, would not duplicate these. Its aim would be to include not only the work of the contemporary printers, but to assemble as many examples as possible of those of an earlier day, running all the way back to the '50s and '60s.

"I need not point out how valuable such a collection would eventually become to collectors and students and historians of Western printing, for it would present a survey of the whole field here on the Pacific Coast from its beginnings to the present. . . . Such a library could not be built in a day. But once it is started and its value understood, I am sure the Club would find many who would gladly lend a hand. The thing to do is to make a start . . ."

A worth-while suggestion, surely! A Library of Pacific Coast Typography would unquestionably be a project worthy of the Club's best efforts, and one exactly in line with its purposes. Should this become the Club's next major objective? Suggestions and comment are invited. If the response seems to justify it, the plan will be worked out in detail and submitted to the members for approval.

¶ A number of members have asked if The Question Box, the department for the exchange of bibliographical information about books relating to the West, has been permanently abandoned. This department was begun in the December, 1935, issue. The reason why it has not become a regular feature of the News-Letter is briefly told: not enough material has been forthcoming from the members to justify its continuance. The Club believes that such a department, affording as it does a medium for the discussion of technical phases of Western collecting, can be made to serve an interesting and useful function. The Question Box will gladly be resumed—provided enough members make use of it by submitting bibliographical problems for comment and possible solution.